

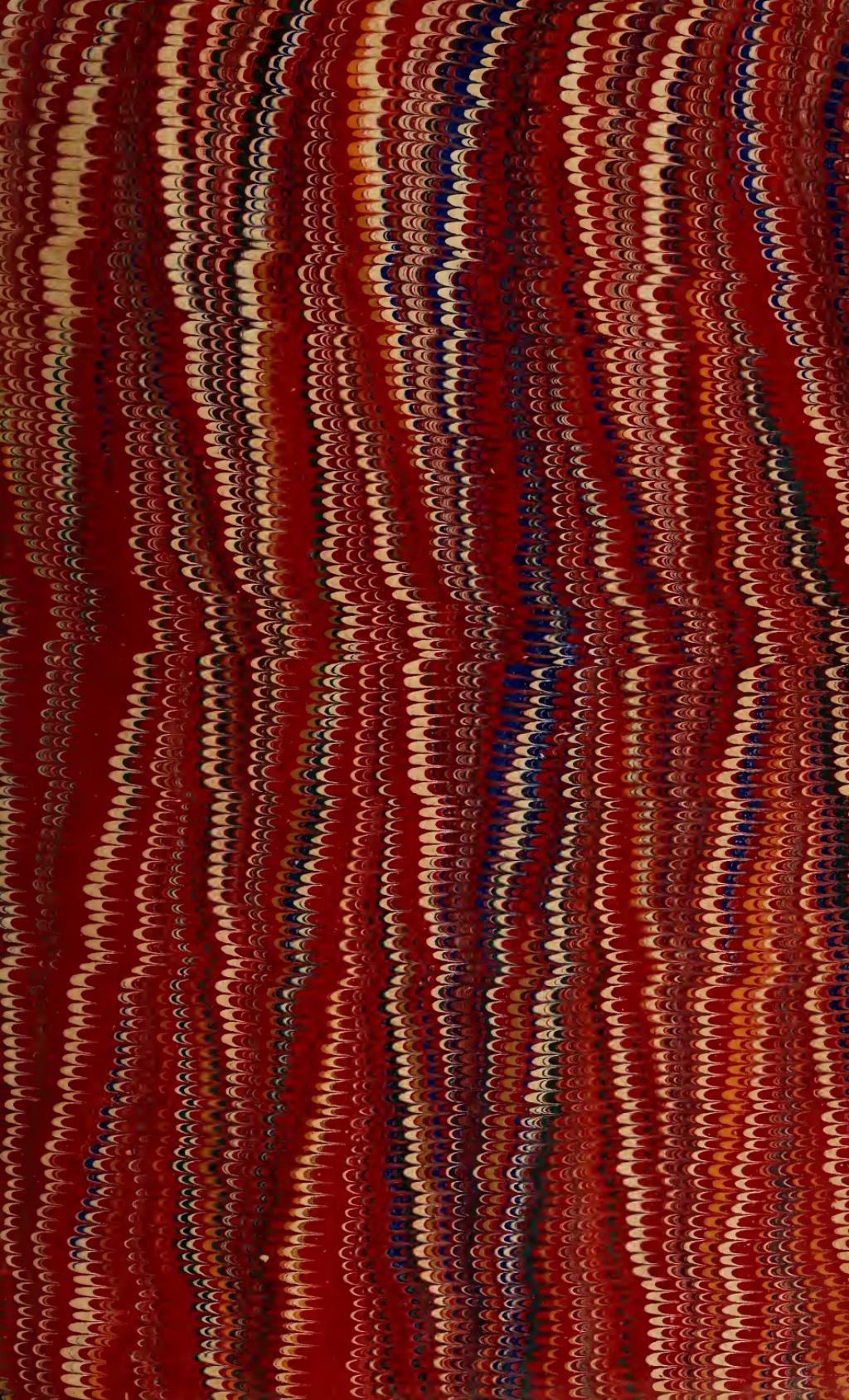
BS  
531  
D8

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

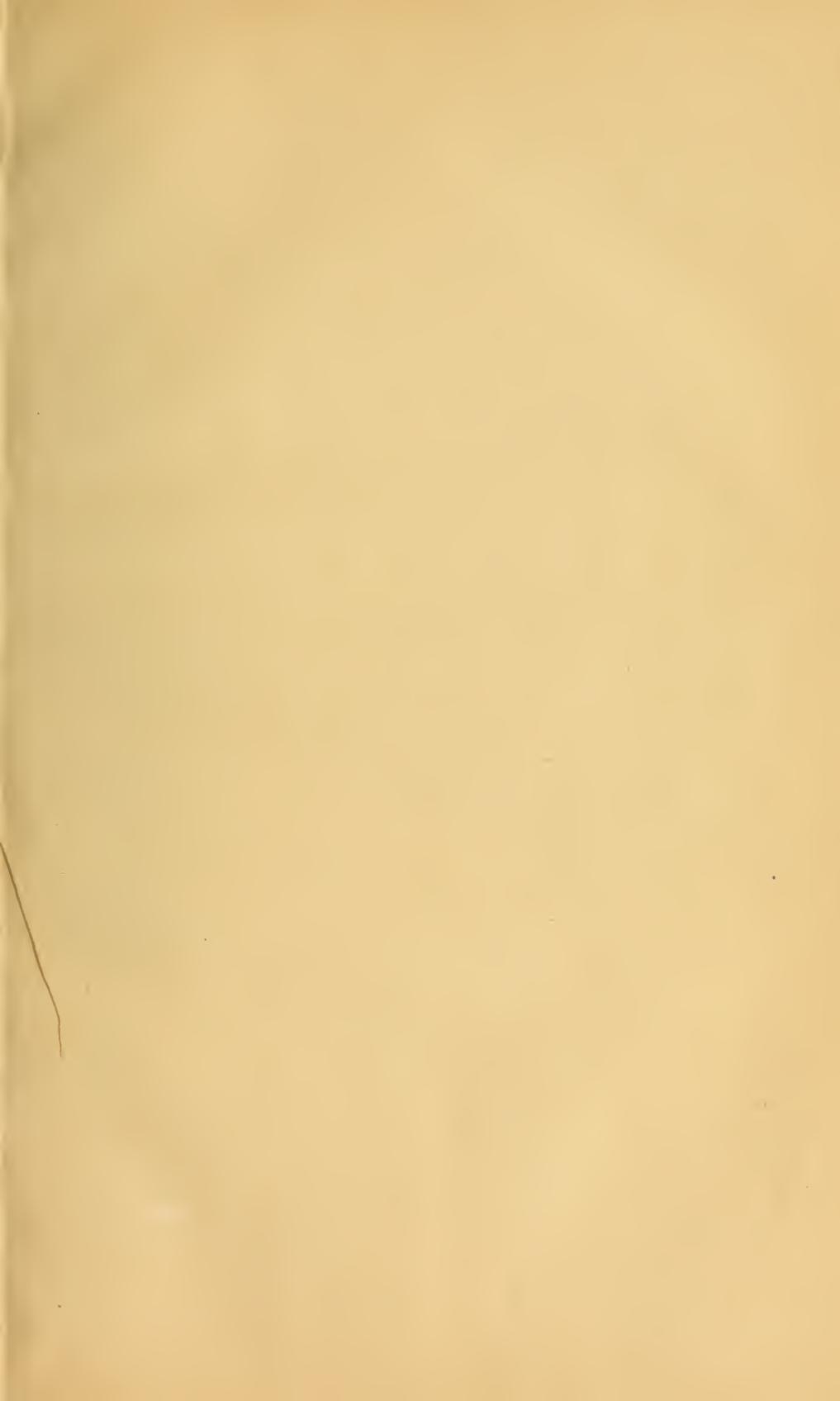
Chap. BS 531

Shelf 18

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

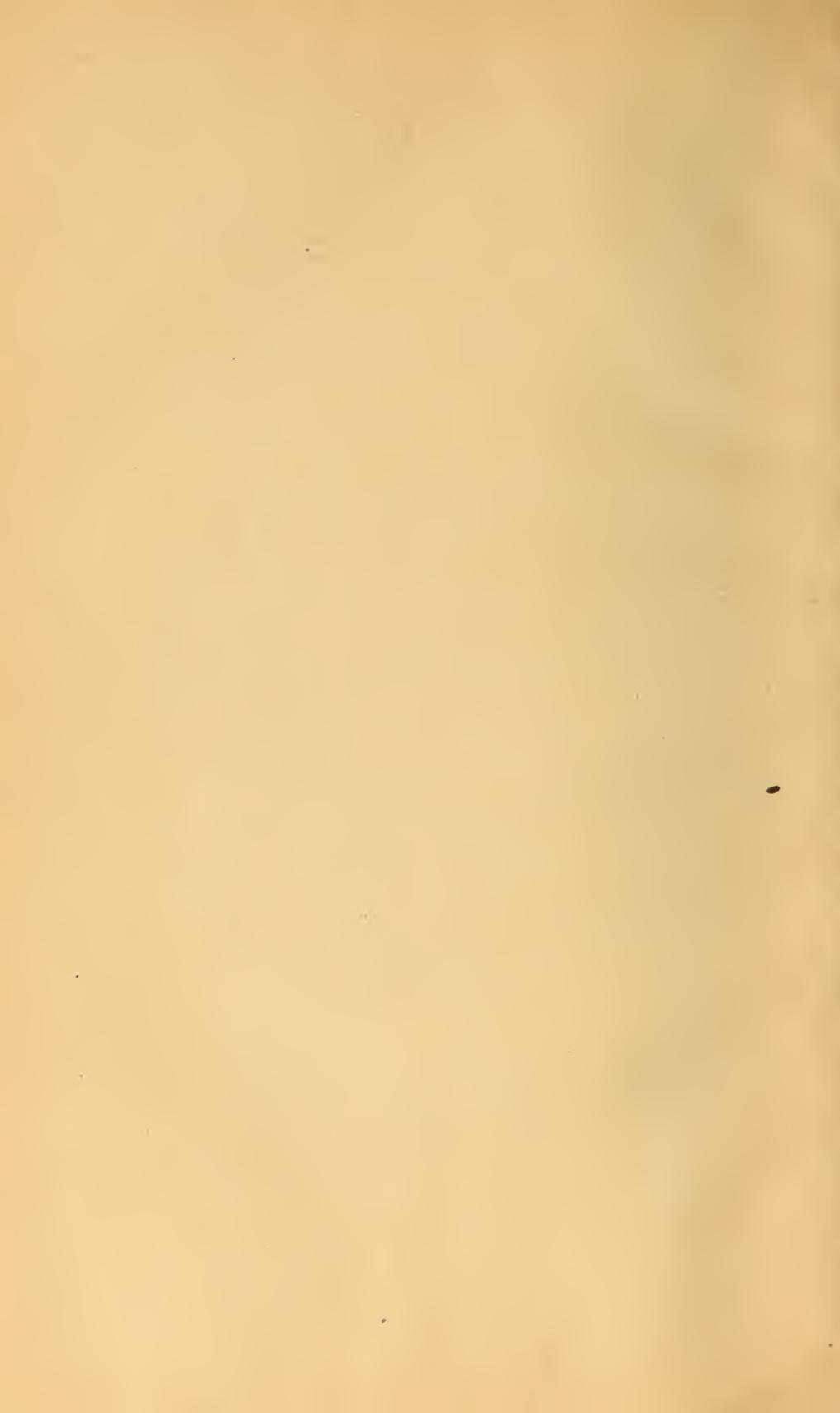












THE IMMORALITIES  
OR  
RELIGIOUS CRITICISM ;

A LETTER TO THE EDITOR OF THE  
"ECLECTIC REVIEW."

BY

HENRY DUNN.



LONDON :

SIMPKIN, MARSHALL, AND CO., STATIONERS' HALL COURT.

*Price Sixpence.*

1866.

BS 531  
J8

*The Book to which the following Letter refers is entitled "ORGANIZED CHRISTIANITY:—IS IT OF MAN OR OF GOD?" By the author of "The Destiny of the Human Race," and consists of 194 pp. post 8vo. The Publishers are Simpkin, Marshall, and Co., Stationers' Hall-court, London. It may be had for a Shilling, of any Bookseller in Town or Country.*

## A LETTER, &c.

---

SIR,

It has sometimes been questioned whether or no, on the whole, our so-called religious periodicals do more good or harm to the cause they are intended to promote. Few, I suppose, will dispute that they must be injurious rather than beneficial whenever they become remarkable by the absence of such essentially Christian characteristics as justice, candour, and truth. Yet this is the present condition of the "Eclectic Review."

The particular article\* which has called forth this letter is, in every way, a singular one. I scarcely know what terms to use in characterizing its assertions. Were I to speak of them merely as misrepresentations, the real character of the passages to which I am about to refer would not be fairly expressed, for they are *much more* than this. If I call them falsehoods I use a word which is, I know, justly regarded as offensive. I am, however, compelled to do so. By no other name is it possible rightly to designate statements which are (I say it without attributing any evil motive), both in letter and in spirit, *utterly and absolutely untrue*.

I cannot render these misstatements more obvious than by placing together in each case, as I now proceed to do, the Falsehood and the Fact,—your random assertion, and the voice of the book itself.

---

\* "A Plea for the Disorganization of Christianity." Art. vii. Nov. 1866

- The random assertion :—

“The writer would have all churches broken up, dissolved and scattered, and *individualism solitary and alone* exercise its influence.”—(E. R. p. 439.)

The voice of the book :—

“It is every way most *undesirable* to become isolated, and by any step, however conscientiously it may be taken, to disable ourselves from acting with bodies of Christian men, whom we cannot but love.”—(O. C., p. 167.)

“True Christian communion is one of the most pressing wants of the human spirit. We all need to be refreshed and enriched by others—to be quickened by something that is not within ourselves. Heart must act on heart, and life on life. The *religious poor* especially need spiritual sympathy to make up for the want of that ordinary intercourse with educated Christians which is hindered by the artificial distinctions of civilized life. In a true Church-life alone can this be had; for, as it has been truly observed, “the Christian belongs to a kingdom in which there is nothing unrelated. *There no man liveth and no man dieth to himself.*”—(O. C., p. 106.)

“Surely we have our model, if anywhere, in the Primitive Church—established, as it was, by inspired men, and declared to be ‘the body of Christ,’ the ‘communion of saints,’ the ‘light of the world,’ the witness-bearing society, distinguished chiefly by its meekness and patience, its purity and brotherly love. Here we come, I imagine, as near to the *beau ideal* of the Church in all ages as we are likely to do, and have little more to learn as to its teaching and government than is presented to us in Scripture.”—(O. C., p. 113.)

“National as well as voluntary churches have each achieved the ends for which they were adapted; every sect and party without exception has, in its degree, helped to elevate public opinion, to improve the condition of humanity, to dignify life, to repress crime, and to promote virtue.”—(O. C., p. 46.)

In addition to the foregoing, an entire chapter (viii.) is devoted to “the Ministry of the Church.”

The random assertion :—

“It (Organized Christianity) is a plea for reducing Church life, not only to the merest minimum of communion, but a communion in which all the members shall *know each other's individuality*, and find that individuality shaped *exactly to the same narrow pattern* of idea and experience.”—(E. R., p. 439.)

### The voice of the book :—

“ To attempt to base (Communion) on common opinions is absurd ; to regard it as consisting in the recital of experiences, or as developing itself under regulations of a more or less inquisitorial kind, is to mistake altogether its true character.”—(O. C., p. 107.)

“ The very attempt to give evidence to others of spiritual life leads, almost of necessity, to a constraint and self-consciousness which is anything but wholesome ; it occasions *danger*, were it only from the fact that a candidate for admission almost always imagines that a certain standard of feeling must be maintained whether natural or not ; that wherever there is stimulus or pressure there is sure to be collapse ; and that whatever lays stress on a particular order of thought and feeling ‘ *casts the heart too much on itself*,’ and in so doing leads it away from Christ.

“ Nor is this all. Any attempt to be spiritual *up to a certain standard*, supposed to be attained by a given religious body, endangers sincerity and promotes doubt. Artificial stimulants are in such a case almost always employed, and the result, even when there is no hypocrisy, is to produce a state of mind under which the soul narrows and withers.”—(O. C., pp. 120—1.)

“ Our spiritual life is to be quickened and strengthened by intercourse with those who are better and stronger than ourselves, while we in turn are to render to fellow-Christians, and especially to the young and inexperienced, all that help, both material and moral, which is implied in the apostolic command, ‘ Bear ye one another’s burdens.’”—(O. C., p. 106.)

### The random assertion :—

“ What will *our author’s sect* be but a narrow Pharasaic cluster of people, with heads erect in spiritual pride, affecting pity, and feeling real indifference to the perishing world without the little sect or sects he would create ?”—(E. R., p. 443.)

### The voice of the book :—

“ It is a mercy for which we can never be too thankful that separations, *as such*, can never be more than partial, and rarely other than sectarian ; that individualism, however valuable in correcting popular opinions, or in laying bare cherished evils, can build no temple to its own glory, or sever Christian from Christian without finding its punishment in its sin.”—(O. C., p. 191.)

“ Perhaps all that can be done *at present* is to endeavour to excite a *willingness* to investigate ; to enkindle, if it be possible, a disposition to *inquire*, not for what may be considered as most expedient, but for what is true ; not for what may be regarded as most

practicable, but for what God has sanctioned ; to inquire, not in the hope of being able to graft here or there, on the old stock, some new device or other, but simply to ascertain what is right, and, when this is ascertained, to spread such conviction without reference *as yet* to anything beyond the propagation of true thought, since in no other way but by the growth of true thought can the interests of godliness ever be permanently advanced.

“ All *hasty* procedures in what is called a practical direction are both unpractical and evil, since they commonly proceed either from impatience or self-will. Not till right ideas have made considerable way, not till an atmosphere has been created in which new practices will work healthily, is it either wise or right to attempt their introduction. ‘ Few persons, however,’—as has been well said by Mr. Matthew Arnold, in his admirable essay ‘ On the Functions of Criticism,’—‘ and very few Englishmen indeed, can understand or appreciate such a course. The cry of the present day on all hands is **CONSTRUCT**. They who join in this cry forget that, for construction, ‘ two powers must concur—the power of the man, and the power of the moment.’ He who is destined in the long run to accomplish most in the correction of the evils which now oppress us, is the man who is most willing to wait for suitable materials before he begins to build, or, if needful, to provide them for others ; who is able to hold a truth firmly without seeking to revolutionize the world with it ; who is content to handle it *disinterestedly*, and without reference to any party objects whatever ; who steadily refuses to lend himself to ulterior considerations ; whose aim is first to know the best that can be known, and then to create, by the agency of this knowledge, a current of true and fresh ideas ; the man, above all, who never ceases to protest with all his might against whatever makes truth subserve interests not its own ; whatever stifles it with practical considerations ; whatever makes practical ends the first thing, and true thought the second thing.’ If we are honest in such a course, we shall neither be deterred from investigation, nor turn away in despondency, because the path we have to pursue may be strewed with the wrecks or whitened by the bones of previous explorers.”—(O. C., pp. 174—175.)

#### The random assertion :—

“ The work of evangelization was all done and finished in the days of the Apostles ; so to attempt to convert mankind must be synonymous with persecution.”—(E. R., p. 440.)

“ The savage is to seek civilization ; the convict and the thief are to be self-transformed ; the child to be self-educated ; the depraved self-governed. He proclaims the doctrine of ‘ limitation as opposed to universality.’ This was the mark of Judaism—it is the mark of

Christianity also:—‘ We are Christians, you are not ; on the contrary, we know you well ; you are lost souls—heirs of wrath ; but help yourselves, and God help you ; for us, we have no commission to pray for you, to preach to you, or to enlighten you ; out of your way we get ; you poor and wretched, sick and sore ; we belong to the order of the Levites, who beheld, we know, the distressed, and “ passed by on the other side.” ’ This is the cheerful doctrine of this precious bijou.”—(*E. R.*, p. 441.)

### The voice of the book :—

“ The glad tidings should be declared in every nation ‘ for a witness ’ (*Matt. xxiv. 14*), the wall of partition between Jew and Gentile being now broken down, and all the world made one in Christ.”—(*O. C.*, p. 8.).

“ Whatever obligation may rest upon any of us—minister or layman—to spread the glad tidings of redemption,—and I should be the last to deny such an obligation,—it seems clear enough that *this particular command*, as given by our Lord, cannot be separated from the promise by which it was accompanied.”—(*O. C.*, p. 6.)

“ A believer will not only accept the Gospel, he will both live and *teach* it, even at a cost few in this generation seem disposed to pay,—the cost of time now devoted to business. No man can, properly speaking, be a disciple of Christ who does not learn *in order that he may teach* ;—not perhaps publicly, for few are called to this duty, but at least individually and socially,—in the family, in limited circles, in private conversation, and this on the ground that, being a Christian, he is *an appointed conservator of truth*.”—(*O. C.*, p. 145.)

“ *Being* what we ought to be, there will be little danger of our failing to *do* what we are called upon to perform.”—(*O. C.*, p. 181.)

“ We shall be neither less earnest, nor, I trust, less successful in our endeavours to extend the knowledge of Christ, whether at home or abroad. But we shall proceed on somewhat different principles from those which now largely animate us. We shall sow the good seed more zealously than ever, but we shall be less restless about results. We shall learn not only when to speak, but when to be silent ; not only when to work, but when to refrain from working ; when, in short, to retire, that God may more manifestly come upon the scene.”—(*O. C.*, p. 89.)

“ An entire chapter (vii.) is, in addition, devoted to ‘ the Preacher of the Gospel,’ a duty always regarded as ever pressing.”

### The random assertion :—

“ Wretched—pre-eminently wretched—is all this narrow-mindedness—this perpetually thinking of *my* soul—the sure sign of bad

spiritual health. The man who is ever talking of *my* stomach—‘*my* digestion,’ his conversation is not entertaining. *This is what the writer means* by the perfecting of the few—certainly, it will have one result, and it will be to him a gratifying note of praise; ‘Lord, I have been honoured to do very little good in the world! I have had too many whims and notions, and crochets in my head for that; but I am thankful that in these, my declining days, my powers are being used to *prevent* the good that others might do! I am thankful that I infected old Wright with doubt, and he has taken off his guinea from the Missionary Society. I stopped young Wilson as he was starting off to persuade an unbeliever to think of Christ. I am glad I have quite put a spoke in Mary’s teaching in the Sunday-school, and I believe we shall hear no more about Bible Societies in my neighbourhood. Come, come, these things make a man look up. I am not without some influence after all.’ Does all this sound very severe? but *this is the very intention of the writer*, and these are the things for which he might offer up his psalm of praise.”

“Missionary organizations he dreads and despises. ‘Hath a nation changed its gods’ at any time after this fashion? We believe never. The Gospel, like civilisation, is a light which must be carried to be known. It is amusing to read this dreaming apology for human indolence and inaction hiding itself beneath the subterfuge that the Christian, like the Israelite, is not to preach the truth but to live it—to be an attractive, but not an aggressive, missionary.”—(*E.R.*, p. 441.)

“The cry of the book before us: ‘*Let us sleep as do others.*’ Of the personal excellence of the author, although we have no knowledge of him, we do not entertain a doubt; but a more thorough-going piece of Antinomian heresy, we have not for a long time read or seen.”—(*E. R.*, p. 446.)

### The voice of the book :—

“The individual believer who listens to the voice of Christ must, at whatever cost, ‘look not on his own things only, but on the things of others;’ he must do unto others as he would that they, if he were in their circumstances, should do unto him; he must put his shoulders under another’s burdens, and he must bear (suffer by) the infirmities of the weak.”—(*O. C.*, p. 165.)

“But let them not imagine that those who adopt other views, and who strive rather after the Christian perfection of the few than the general improvement of the many, *therefore* do nothing for society at large. This is not the fact; for it is unquestionable that all the *secondary influences* of Christianity depend for their force much more on the influence of individual example than either on religious rites or

public teaching. The performance of rites may be, and frequently is, but a cloak to hypocrisy. Teaching, however good, too generally resembles the action of the sun on desert plains, it falls on unpropitious soil. But the influence of example, if it acts at all, is not only in itself quickening and life-giving, *it suggests the source* from whence all that is good proceeds.”—(O. C., p. 110.)

What is really meant by “the perfecting of the few” cannot, perhaps, be better illustrated than by the following quotation from a letter written by Archbishop Whately to a young clergyman :—

“Do not begin,” he says, “by devoting your chief attention to those who seem to want reformation most: select the best informed and best disposed—improve *these*, and use them as your instruments in reforming their neighbours. If you had a promiscuous pile of wood to kindle, where would you apply your light, to the green sticks or to the dry ?”—(Life and Corr., vol. i.)

The principle laid down by the Archbishop is precisely that on which God governs the world ; and the non-recognition of it is one main cause of the darkness which so often seems to rest on the dealings of Providence with mankind.

The random assertion :—

“We have remarked how easily the author leaps over Scripture, or breaks it up to serve his own purposes of interpretation when it stands in his way. We could scarcely have expected that the denunciations against the prophets in Scripture, would be turned to account for the purpose of denouncing an order of ministers altogether.”—(E. R., p. 444.)

The voice of the book :—The false prophets are *not* turned to any such account. What is really said is this :—“There is nothing whatever to shew that these (the schools of the prophets) were ever intended to be models for a New Testament ministry.”

Ministers are *nowhere* denounced. These are the words of the author :—

“I most heartily echo the statement that neither clergymen nor Dissenting ministers are, as a body, by any means chargeable with

unfaithfulness. I believe that there never was a time when preachers were, as a rule, more earnest, more devoted, or better qualified for their work than they are now.

“ It may be, as has been suggested, that the minister often ‘ wants faith ’ in the possibility of elevating the character of his people. It may be that, ‘ when face to face with hundreds of souls whose failures and weaknesses and dangers appeal to him for help,’ he sometimes fails, in the brief period that is allotted to him, ‘ to bring out the meaning of the Divine word ; ’ to ‘ carry it home as spirit and life ’ to the consciences of his hearers ; to ‘ show a due regard to the range and comparative worth of motives ; ’ to ‘ guide the formation and growth of Christian character ; ’ to ‘ treat with sufficient frequency and fulness and explicitness of the moral dispositions and habits,’ or to give adequate directions for the use of recognized means of spiritual ‘ improvement.’ But all this is merely to say that he cannot perform impossibilities,—that it is folly to ask for services which no human being, under the circumstances, can render.”—(O. C., pp. 74, 75.)

“ What we really want in a pastor is, ‘ *a man brought nearer than other men are at once to man and God.* ’ The human heart, says a recent writer, ‘ desires one who is greater, purer, kinder, *freer* than itself,—one standing aloof from its conscious falseness, its self-confessed littleness. It must be a life having something sacrificial in it,—something which will oftentimes compel the man to put a space between his own soul and the souls upon which his desires and prayers are set ; he must free himself from every disturbing element, and be content to depart from his brethren in many things and at many seasons, so that he may abide with them for ever in a truer, deeper fellowship than any which is founded upon the conditions of an earthly amity. Unsecularity is the strength and glory of the Christian priesthood ; the agency they deal with is one which, like that of some great mechanic force, must work *apart* from that on which it is brought to bear ; its power is lost in conformity ; it lives in transformation—in renewal ; it is content to die in its own individual hopes and interests, so that, falling within the wide field of humanity, it may, in dying, bring forth much fruit.’

“ Such a man, relieved from the necessity of making sermons without end, and freed from all undue pressure of other obligations, whether philanthropic or religious, *would have time*, and would therefore be expected to live much in quiet meditation ; to cultivate the ‘ meekness of wisdom,’ rather than brilliancy of talent ; *to be*, as well as to teach, what the Christian life requires of us all.

“ Chosen, as in this case he would be, not for his eloquence, his zeal, or his learning, so much as for his sanctified good sense,

his gentleness of character, his sweetness of disposition, his quick sympathy, his holiness of life, and his moral power over others; he would move among his people with the tenderness and love of the nurse who cherisheth her children, and would enter in no slight degree into the experience of that great apostle who could say to his converts, 'I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you.'”—(O. C., pp. 101—103.)

The random assertion :—

“ How comes our author into the possession of such an *inhuman creed?* ”—(E. R., p. 441.)

“ You are lost souls, heirs of wrath ; but help yourselves and God help you, for we have no commission.”—(E. R., p. 441.)

“ A more thorough-going piece of *Antinomian heresy* we have not for a long time read or seen.”—(E. R., p. 446.)

“ Like all of his order he has, and seems as if he would demand in others, *some scepticism* in certain portions of revealed truth.”—(E. R., p. 443.)

The voice of the book :—As to the *inhuman creed*,

“ The salvation of all men cannot be dependent upon their hearing of Christ, and believing upon Him in this life ; for, as the apostle says, ‘ How *can* they hear without a preacher ? ’ ”—(O. C., p. 9.)

“ Let us *rest*, then, in the conviction that God’s love to sinners is not limited by time ; that there is at least a possibility of forgiveness in other worlds than this ; that the lost here are not necessarily all lost hereafter ; that, consequently, the eternal happiness or misery of the human race hangs on something far better than the zeal or the devotion of weak and fallible mortals.”—(O. C., p. 89.)

“ John Foster but expresses the most reasonable of judgments when he says that ‘ the ordinary orthodox view represents God as acting in a secondary or subordinate capacity to the human instruments He employs ; since it supposes Him practically to say to His Church, ‘ If you zealously labour for men’s salvation, I will save them ; otherwise not.’ According to this, the final state of a large portion of the human race is placed at the disposal of a certain order of human beings, who might have effected their salvation if they would,—a conclusion which,’ he adds, ‘ I think borders on impiety.’ ”—(O. C., p. 87.)

The *Antinomianism* of the work may be judged of from the following :—

“ When any nation, *as such*, adopts Christianity, and professes to

govern itself by the law of Christ, compromise is inevitable, and the conventionalisms of a *Christianized* community necessarily take the place of the sterner and more rigid demands of the Master. But what the nation does as *an organized whole* is seldom surpassed by the individuals of which it is composed. The all but inevitable result, under such conditions, is *the general lowering, in practical life*, of a standard regarded as too high for the world as it is, although the original ideal of right as laid down in 'the Book' may still be taught, and, in the abstract, reverenced. Nothing is more certain than that every one of us is likely to become 'better or worse morally, to advance or to retrograde socially, according to the standard of life which prevails around us—*a standard which we are each individually helping to depress or to raise.*' The difficulty of rising above this level is felt by every one who aspires after a truly noble and spiritual life."—(O. C., p. 43.)

The *Scepticism* demanded appears, I suppose, in passages like the following :—

"I have said, and I am sure with truth, that the present age is *an age of feeble convictions*. But a disciple of Christ should be known quite as much *by the strength of his belief* as by the harmony of his conduct with the teachings of the Book by which he professes to be guided.

"I do not mean to affirm that such a man *must* necessarily hold this or that theory of inspiration ; or that he must deny the existence of a human element in the Bible, *without which* it would not have been fit for its purpose, but with which is inevitably associated a certain amount of liability to error, *in cases where verbal accuracy is not all important*, and where, therefore, it has not been secured by verbal inspiration. But I do maintain that his convictions must be of a kind and character *very far above* all such considerations ; that they must be unfaltering and unassailable,—deep as the consciousness he has of his own responsibility to God, and indelible as the very instincts of his nature.

"Evidences set forth in books,—however valuable and important in their place,—can never supply what is needed. The belief on which a man is to live must rest on experience ; on an experience not less real than that which guides him in daily life ; which gives him an unshaken confidence in the regularity of the laws of nature, and which leads him, day by day, to stake all that is dear to him on the stability of the material world. The first preachers of the Gospel triumphed in consequence of their unshaken confidence in the certainty of that **GREAT BODY OF FACTS** on which they rested all they taught.

They *knew* in whom they had believed, and by the force of that knowledge they conquered in an age which was even more sceptical than our own. This alone is, properly speaking, FAITH."—(O. C., pp. 141, 142.)

The way of *handling* Scripture called "narrow and miserable," is that which protests against any use of Bible texts which is inconsistent with their original meaning. Will the Editor, on this subject, listen for a moment to two men, by no means undistinguished either for learning or piety? The one is Dr. John Pye Smith, who thus writes:—

"It may be asked,—Are we not at liberty to take striking passages of Scripture, and apply them to new and important purposes, upon a principle of accommodation? Permit me to answer this question by asking another. Are we at liberty to put any meaning upon the Word of God different from *its own* proper, designed, and genuine sense, as ascertained by competent investigation?"—(Prin. of Int. 1831.)

The other is Archbishop Whately, who observes—

"I think it dangerous and hardly reverent to apply any passage of Scripture to a purpose foreign from the context. If what we mean to recommend is taught in *other* passages of Scripture, *those* ought to be the ones adduced; if again, without being expressly taught, it is agreeable to Scripture and to reason, let it rest on those grounds. But a misapplication of a Scripture text, though it may be harmless in some particular instance, affords countenance to a most pernicious practice."—(Life and Cor., vol. i.)

After the terrible exposure I have been obliged to make, it is to me peculiarly gratifying to be able to recognize anything truthful in an article which, at first sight, would seem to be from beginning to end, *one lengthened lie*.

Let me say then at once that the Editor speaks truly of the author when he supposes him to allow that he has been "honoured to do very *little good* in the world." Nobody can be more sensible of this than himself, although he certainly does not give thanks *on that account*.

He is quite right also in affirming that 'Organized Christianity' is being "read in many circles in different parts of the kingdom," and that "it is just the book to satisfy the cravings of *innumerable hosts* growing up in our Churches." I cannot however agree with him in thinking such cravings to be "morbid," or that they are felt only by persons "who eke out the shortcomings of their own inability by scoffing at, or arguing against all well-meant effort." I am sorry to find that in his opinion "innumerable hosts" of such scoffers are to be found in Congregational churches.

Regarding the article *as a whole*, I can only say I pity the man who could write such trash, and still more the religious body that is thus represented in its "Congregational Review." Archbishop Whately somewhere says that "a *genuine* reviewer is a mixture of haughty self-conceit and flippant buffoonery—an ancient mountebank and a merry-andrew combined." Add to this the recklessness both of style and statement which characterizes the "penny-a-liner," and you will have some modern editors painted to the life.

I wonder whether the august writer of the "Eclectic" ever reads what he pens. Only in February last,—while disagreeing with its conclusions,—he says of this same "Organized Christianity"—

"It is written by a thoughtful and well-read man. . . . "Let those who are minded to see what an intelligent, earnest man has to say on this subject, and how he calmly pours out his sense of disappointment over the failure of all the aggressive actions the Church has put forth, read this book." . . . "A doctrine like his was a gospel to us twenty-five or thirty years since, and we are quite aware of its side of spiritual strength, and that if every lover of and believer in the Saviour had an equally intense and earnest nature, 'light of the world' and 'salt of the earth' believers would assuredly be." (E. R., Feb., 1866, p. 185-6.)

I am afraid the fact is, that up to this hour he is quite ignorant of the contents of the book lie has *twice* undertaken to review. But if so, *where is his conscience?* Where also, I might ask, is the conscience of the religious public in relation to transgressions of this character? None are so little thought of; none are so readily condoned; yet none are so demoralizing; none so likely to deprave the moral sentiment of the Christian community. How fearfully low, then, must the state of public opinion in the religious world be in relation to matters of this kind, when such gross deviations from right, excite no remark beyond perhaps an expression of surprize that any one should think it worth while to notice them.

But enough of this wretched production. I gladly turn from its absurdities to address a few words to the ministers of that particular body to which the Editor belongs. Among them are not a few whom I am proud to number amongst my best friends, and a rather extended acquaintance with others has led me to think and speak of them generally as men who, in not a few points, are far ahead of the laity in their desires for the edification of the flock.

In relation to "Organized Christianity," some of them have not hesitated to bear witness to "its unselfish and disinterested motives, to its purity of aim, and to the justness of much that it contains." Others have told me how much they "sympathize with, and appreciate its broad, catholic, and unsectarian spirit," and some I know, are even now endeavouring, with a wise cautiousness, to test its suggestions by experience.

To such—to *all*, indeed, I am anxious to state as simply as may be, *what I aim at, and the means by which I seek the accomplishment of that which I desire to see effected.*

Ten years ago, I ventured to say, in a little book now all but out of print,\* that—

“In an age and country like our own, the Church and the world act and re-act on each other, with unusual rapidity and force. *From THE CHURCH*, the world takes both its notions of religion, and its basis of morality. *By* the Church its manners are chastened, its laws modified, its tone elevated, and its opinions in many respects formed and guided.

“*From THE WORLD*, on the other hand, the Church receives status, money, and social respect. *By* the World, its enthusiasm is more or less checked, its ideal of right somewhat lowered, its standard of practical godliness kept down.

“Mutually influencing each other in this friendly spirit, antagonism in time altogether ceases ; something like compromise takes place ; reviling is exchanged for regard ; and the lion and the lamb ‘lie down’ together so peacefully, that ‘a little child’ might ‘lead them.’ Hand in hand, the old opponents walk together, mutually rejoicing in the advance of civilization, the humanizing of society, the triumphs of science, the binding together of nations, the spread of commerce, and the coming of that golden age when, witnessing the fulfilment alike of heathen and of Jewish prophecy, the world shall at length become the dwelling-place of a happy and united brotherhood.

“Such are the facts of the case. Of course there is a shady side to the picture, for sin and misery, vice and want, abound as much as ever, and men generally are too restless to be happy. But since everything in this world has its counterbalance, why should we dwell on that which only produces sadness ? So men reason.”

That, to some extent, this state of things is the natural and necessary result of the spread of Christianity cannot be denied.

“A Christian, in the days of the Apostles, differed from other men *outwardly*, as much as inwardly. He was, commonly, either a wanderer or an outcast ; for the life that was around him, whether private or social or public, involved, at every turn, practices which were in themselves absolutely corrupting or blasphemous. But the reverse of all this is the case now, the distinction in question being almost entirely *inward*.

---

\* “‘The Spirit of Truth,’ a Supplement to ‘The Comforter,’” by Delta.

“ A Christian, in the present day, is simply one who makes daily war *within*, against evils to which others willingly submit ; and in him, as has been beautifully said, we may view ‘ the picture of a man struggling with effect against his earth-born propensities, and yet hateful to himself for the very existence of them,—holier than any of the people around him, and yet humbler than them all,—realizing, from time to time, a positive increase to the grace and excellency of his character, and yet becoming more tenderly conscious every day of its remaining deformities,—gradually expanding in attainment, as well as in desire, towards the light and the liberty of heaven, and yet groaning under a yoke, from which death alone will fully emancipate him.’

“ But if things *as they are*, may be, in some degree, regarded as of God, they are not *wholly* so. So far as the world is benefited, however indirectly, by the influence of the Church, God is well pleased ; but *so far* as the Church is cooled in its zeal, or its ideal of good lowered, or the range of its principles limited by its intercourse with the World, so far it is disloyal to its Lord, and a traitor to its trust.”

We ask then, *has* the standard of godliness *as a fact* been lowered in consequence of the extension of a religious profession ? It is not for me to decide this grave question. I can only state what, right or wrong, is *the general opinion* of Christianized society.

“ There can be no question whatever, that if it were possible to stand in Cheapside, and to compel every passer-by, one by one, to give, to the best of his belief, a distinct and straightforward answer to this inquiry,—“ Do you perceive, or do you believe, that there is *any perceptible difference* in the conduct of Christian persons, as compared with that of others, in the dealings of the mart, the Stock Exchange, the share market, the counting-house, the warehouse, and the shop ? Are they *as a class, supposed to be* less greedy of gain, more honourable, more truthful, more disinterested than others ? the all but universal answer would be—No !

“ If employers of labour were, in like terms, required to state the particulars in which Christian servants, male or female, high or low in rank, differed from worldly ones, it is equally certain that their reply, with a few striking exceptions, would be, ‘ There is no difference at all.’

“ And if, leaving both these classes, literary men,—editors of journals, reviews, magazines,—were in turn also desired to state

their conscientious belief, whether *religious* newspapers and periodicals were or were not, *as a whole*, distinguished by greater candour, a wider charity, more truthfulness in statement, more conscientiousness in quotation, a greater absence of anything like pandering to the interests of party or the unreasonableness of prejudice, than secular journals? it cannot be doubted, that with one voice, they would express their inability to discover any such distinction."

The fact is, the *relative* position of the parties has changed.

"The advance of the one has not been accompanied by corresponding advance in the other,—things necessarily assume a new aspect, and the following alternative seems to present itself,—Either the distinction between the Church and the World, of which we talk so much, will soon become altogether fictitious, *or*, some great onward movement must again place the Church on higher ground, and once more make it, *in the eyes of all men*, 'A CITY SET ON AN HILL.'

"But how is this to be brought about?

"Not, certainly, as many excellent Churchmen have thought, by the revival of mediæval devotion, practices, or claims. Not, assuredly, as others, equally devoted, whether in or out of the Establishment, have hoped, by showers of Divine grace, falling, in answer to our prayers, upon churches and missions, whether at home or abroad; for *both* these expectations proceed on the belief, that existing views and agencies are, unquestionably, Divine in their character, and that, therefore, the mechanism of Earth, however feeble and defective, is destined, ere long, to be moved by nothing less than the omnipotence of Heaven."

"A few more words in conclusion, and then these imperfect, though by no means hasty thoughts, shall be cast like 'bread upon the waters,' in the firm belief that, whether neglected or scorned now, they will be found, and do their work, 'after many days.'

"The VISIBLE UNITY of the Church in all important matters, and the visible MORAL ELEVATION of Christians as a body, over those by whom they are surrounded, are the conditions under which alone true Christianity can advance in the world. But *how* these great blessings are to be secured, it is hard to say: it is the problem that this age or the next *must* solve, and it may be that, in either case, the solution will involve much suffering. Perhaps it is *impossible* that Christians should unite, before God has scattered them, or that the Church should be *re*-formed, before God has broken it up. Perhaps in no other way is it practicable, to make men *feel* and act upon the

conviction, that creeds are not Christianity, and that Scripture, as an authority, stands alone. Perhaps, never till they are deprived of Christian ordinances, will they be able to perceive their true meaning and value ; to understand how it comes to pass, that the same preaching, which is needful for the feeble, ‘enfeebles the strong ;’ that what are called ‘religious advantages,’ may easily become in practice great and fatal disadvantages,—so that many who, but for these things, would long since have been teachers of others, still ‘need to be taught the first principles of the oracles of God ;’ that men may have the Bible in their hands, and yet cherish fraudulent designs in their hearts ; that banks may be opened with prayer, and yet end in gigantic swindling : and that *all this may arise*, from the habitual separation, in Christian society, of doctrinal truth and moral truth,—a distinction quite unknown to the Apostles,—leading, as it invariably does, to the exaltation of the one, as the *root* of all goodness, and the consequent depression of the other, as mere secular virtue, which is sure to follow the reception of the Gospel.”

I make these quotations in order to shew that, whatever may be the merits or demerits of any of my opinions, that which I have advanced has at least been well considered and carefully weighed ; that it is idle to say my remarks spring from “a spirit of impatience with quiet labour ;” and wicked to affirm that “*the very intention of the writer*” is to “*prevent*” sinners from being brought to Christ ; to discourage the instruction of the young ; or to induce men to withdraw their subscriptions from any Missionary Society whatever.”—(E. R., p. 442.)\*

In “Organized Christianity” the *object* I have in view is thus stated :—

“To form and to fix a higher Christian ideal than now prevails ; to rescue the *peculiar moralities* of the Gospel from the conventionalisms which now choke them, and to create and sustain *within the Christian body* a public opinion of its own,—a judgment of things

---

\* The author does not believe that anything he has ever written has *this tendency*. He has no wish to speak of himself, but he may perhaps be permitted to say that his own subscriptions to Missionary Societies or to any other organization for spreading the Gospel have not been diminished in consequence of the views he has been led to adopt.

which the world, however Christianized, will never accept, but which is nevertheless in strict accordance with the teaching of the Lord.—(O. C., p. 171.)

“The truth is, whether we recognize it or not, that the greater part of the morality practised day by day by all classes is *purely conventional*. We all shrink from adopting any course which seems to condemn others; *sometimes*, like religious slave-owners, playing our pleasant deceptions off in the face of the plainest truths, and *always* forgetful that we are using an instrument subtle enough and elastic enough to accommodate practical life to any standard which may, at any period, happen to prevail in Christianized society. Thus it is man lowers the heavenly to the earthly; and, whether a preacher or a hearer, too often contrives to depress the Divine law to that which he considers the absolute requirements of ordinary life.

“The scepticism of the eighteenth century sprang up in a soil of this character; that of the nineteenth, destined, I fear, to prove eventually more desolating than its predecessor, because connected with *far more activity of mind, and a deeper earnestness in relation to life and its responsibilities*, can only be checked by an end being put to the strange contrasts between words and things which now so perplex men.”—(O. C., pp. 167—168.)

The following remarks may be taken for what they are worth. No man, at all events, will be the worse for pondering them.

“The Nonconformist bodies, originating for the most part in secession from the national establishment, and professing to realize a higher and purer communion,—untrammelled by the State, and free to act according to the dictates of conscience,—have no hindrance to contend with beyond that which arises from their own public opinion leading them to attempt, so far as their ability extends, *the very same work* which the Church of England is ever trying to do, viz., to *Christianize the community*, by promoting a mixed worship, and by spreading as far as they can the knowledge of God, through public preaching, the visitation of the poor, and such other means as may seem likely to answer the end. Their main object, indeed, seems to be to prove that they can do this work *better* than the Church of England; that voluntary societies are for Christian purposes preferable to endowed agencies; that the support of the State in such work is unfavourable to purity, to freedom, and to vigour.

“But is this their calling of God? Has it not led, and is it not sure to lead, just in proportion as equality makes way, to all the evils that beset established communions? to the recognition of a profes-

sional order of religious teachers, and to the love of power and of social and political influence, so far as it can be obtained, either by popular speech, or by ecclesiastical organization ? I think it *does*, and must continue to do so while human nature is unchanged. Is not this tendency increasingly visible in rivalries of various kinds ? in Gothic buildings, in expensive edifices, in steeples, in desires for liturgical services, in chants, in artistic singing, in the use of organs, in ritualistic tastes, in decorations, in altar-cloths over communion tables, and in a growing dislike to, and contempt for, all notions that are anti-clerical ?—(*O. C.*, pp. 187—188.)

The *means* by which the desired end,—the elevation of the Christian body,—is most likely to be accomplished must, of course, be open to discussion. My own conviction is that preaching (using that word in its modern and technical sense) cannot do more than it has done ; that the press will be found equally powerless ; that something more, and something different from that which now is, has become absolutely essential. But to advocate *innovation* is, just as much among Dissenters as among others, to breast at once obloquy and opposition, popular prejudice, and reproach from all those who consider that institutions which they regard as sacred may perchance be endangered or overturned. Of such I have no hope ;—“ their carcases must fall in the wilderness ;” but the rising generation may perhaps “ be kept untainted, and brought into a good land.”\*

I am far, however, from wishing to dogmatize on a subject so beset with difficulties. I simply throw out the following suggestions for the consideration of all whom they may concern.

“ Changes are clearly coming over us, the direction and extent of which few care to contemplate ; and perhaps nothing now can stay their course. That *preaching*, from some cause or other, is *going down* in public estimation must, I fear, be admitted. That in

---

\* Archbishop Whately.

exactly the same proportion a love of ritualism is rising up seems little less certain. Nor can it be otherwise if our existing church and chapel system is right in principle ; \* for a mixed crowd or congregation can only be kept together and interested in one of two ways—either by oratory or by ritualism. If preaching fall into disrepute, nothing will retain the multitude but some æsthetic form of worship. If the ear be not regaled, the eye must be attracted. If the intellect be not addressed, the senses must.

“ I am not, of course, imagining that preaching will, in any case, be given up, for even in the Romish Church it is a wonderful element of power. I am merely intimating my belief that the *tendency of the time* is to get away from the Presbyterian idea, which regards the church as mainly, if not exclusively, a place of theological instruction ; and to get nearer to the Anglican idea, which regards the pulpit as altogether subordinate to the altar. As a consequence, while what is popularly, although inappropriately, called Puseyism spreads among Episcopalians, the opinion deepens and widens among Non-conformists, that in public services *more prominence* should be given to the worship of the Church, and less to its teaching.

“ I do not wonder at this. It but expresses the natural want of many spiritually minded Christians. But let it not be forgotten, that to have spiritual worship you must have spiritual worshippers ; that to the outside world, to the formal and the irreligious, who form so large a part of ordinary congregations, the strengthening of the worshipping element *means* the exaltation of ritualism, and *nothing else*.

“ What, then, must we do ? Our choice clearly lies between *moving forward* on the line so many are now following, or *stepping backward* to an extent which will altogether change our position in the eye of the world, and call for no little sacrifice and self-denial.

“ This, however, is the path I invite the Nonconformists of England to tread, and to tread it boldly, without distinction of sect or party, regardless of trust-deeds, of denominational interests, of property, of everything that keeps real Christians apart from each other ; regardless,

---

\* At the recent meeting of the Baptist Union, the Rev. J. H. Hinton is said by the *Freeman* and other papers to have “denounced public worship as a solecism in thought and an hypocrisy in act.” He said, “there was not an example of public worship in the whole Bible.” He thought “public worship one of the great misfortunes of the age, and if there was one thing more offensive than another, it was the amount of hypocrisy presented in so called public worshipping services.” These remarks, however startling, may serve to throw light on some observations made in “Organized Christianity,” chapter vii., on “the Preacher and the Gospel.”

too, of theological opinions, whether right or wrong ; of the views of Baptists or Pædobaptists, of Calvinists or Arminians, regardless of all creeds and confessions save one—‘ Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God ;’ merging all other considerations in the one cardinal qualification for fellowship—faith in the Divine Redeemer, and earnest desire to know and do His will. Then would the song, ‘ Thou art the King of Glory, O Christ ! ’ rise to heaven with new acceptance, since it would swallow up every other cry, and embody in its capacious bosom the spoils of the theological universe.

“ Nothing is more certain than that until the Church awakes to *judgment of itself*, will secessions, greater or smaller, *originating* in felt wants, and therefore drawing in their wake some of the best, the most single-hearted, and the most godly amongst us, from time to time first *witness* against that which is wrong, and then *wither* by becoming wrong in the very act of witness ; wither, by becoming narrow, bigoted, and uncharitable, first claiming the right of *judging* those who differ from them, and then exercising the right in still fiercer judgments on one another.

“ One word more and I have done. Is there a Christian man, worthy of the name, who knows nothing of that irrepressible sadness which so often steals over the spirit as we become more and more conscious how far, as individuals, we fall short of that high calling which is presented to us alike in Scripture and in the depths of our own consciousness ? Is there one who would not reject, almost with indignation, the pretence that our noblest aspirations are the mere offspring of discontent—that to soar above the earth is vain—that to strive after perfection is to weary oneself for nought ?

“ Why, then, should such persons think they do well to be angry, when the same order of thought is confronted with the Church and its institutions ? Why should men *welcome* the suggestion that to doubt *its* condition is but to indicate a cynical spirit—to be a fault-finder, dissatisfied, unthankful ? If it be not right to take complacency in what we individually are, is it otherwise than unlawful to glorify what we call “ the Church,” by which I mean *that particular ecclesiastical organization* or institution which we most favour ? Is it permissible to magnify its worth, to exaggerate its value, to be so jealous regarding it, as on no account to allow it to be touched ? Is it right to regard it as a thing too sacred to be questioned, too heavenly to be reformed ? Here, too, if we will believe it, there is room for a Divine sadness.”—(O. C., pp. 188—192.)

I have not attempted to conceal my belief that any advance in the direction I advocate supposes a willing-

ness on the part of Christian fellowships *to risk* much in the way of income, popularity, and standing in the world.

“ It supposes *more than willingness* on the part of pastors to resign exclusive privilege, and to place themselves on a level with their brethren ; for unless they diligently sought out and encouraged suitable persons to unite with them in teaching ; unless they *pressed* the performance of the duty as a high Christian obligation ; unless they themselves habitually kept as much as possible in the background ; unless, in short, they earnestly *desired* the change, and were led to perceive that whatever trials might attend its introduction it would ultimately be as great a blessing to themselves as to their people, all attempts to establish it must end in failure.

“ Let obstacles, however, be what they may, it must not be forgotten, as Vinet well puts it, that ‘ we can never fairly charge to a principle the difficulties and hindrances that attend a return to that principle if it has been long mistaken or forgotten ; or if the contrary principle, organized long ago in society, has penetrated all its parts and modified all its elements.’ ”—(O. C., p. 172.)

THE END.





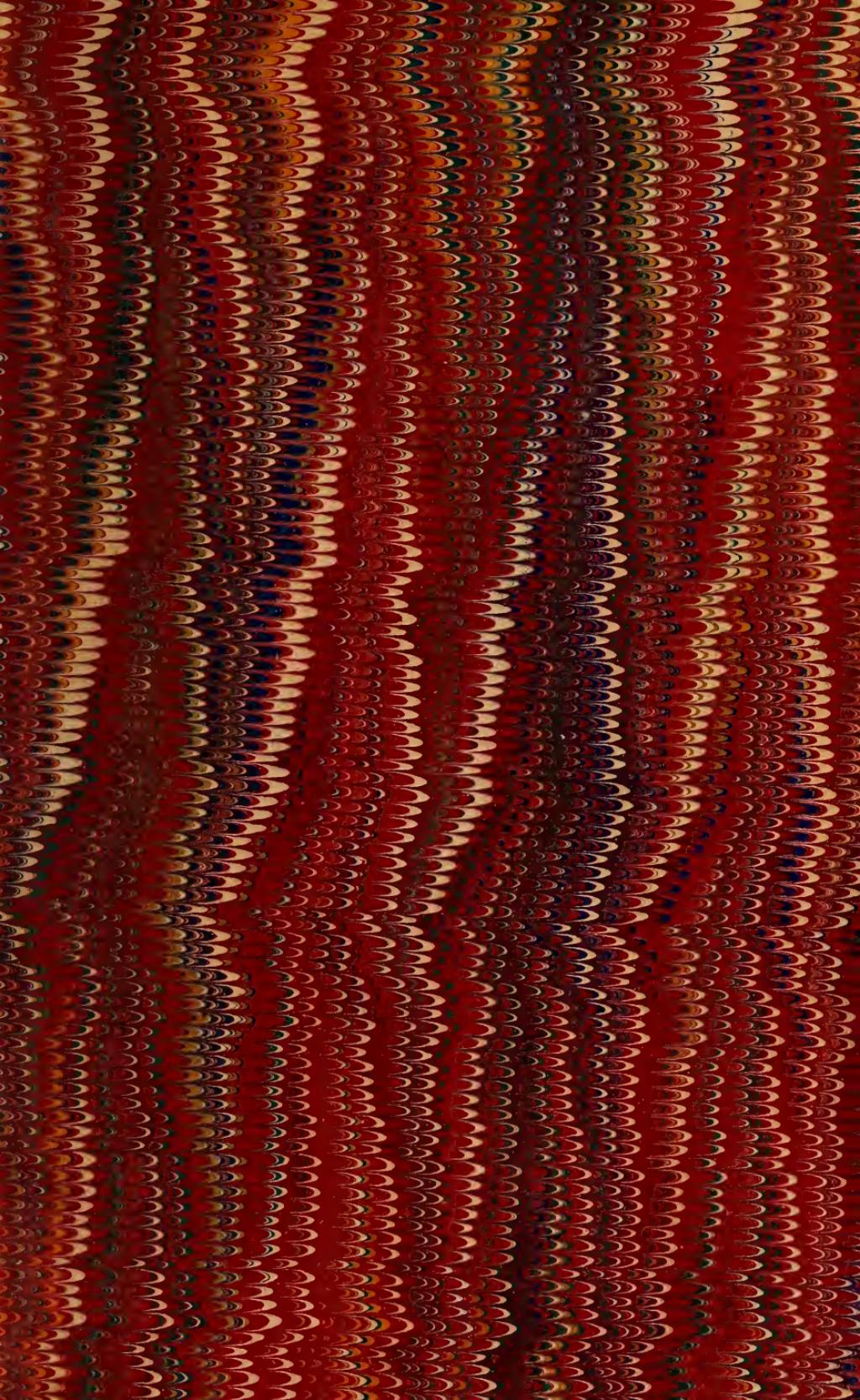




Deacidified using the Bookkeeper process.  
Neutralizing agent: Magnesium Oxide  
Treatment Date: May 2005

**Preservation Technologies**  
A WORLD LEADER IN PAPER PRESERVATION

111 Thomson Park Drive  
Cranberry Township, PA 16066  
(724) 779-2111



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 014 325 451 3